



January 14, 2012

Representative Tom Berry, Chair
Economic Affairs Interim Committee
Legislative Services Division
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Chairman Berry and Committee Members,

As requested by the Economic Affairs Interim Committee (EAIC), representatives from each of the three dental professional associations had opportunities to discuss options for restructuring the Board of Dentistry (BOD). The three professions were unable to agree on one compromise. The Montana Dental Hygienists' Association (MDHA) firmly believes to have any meaningful change to the BOD will require legislative action. The MDHA supports separation of the BOD, creating a Board of Dental Providers to represent denturists and hygienists.

The MDHA believes a separate board for the profession of dental hygiene will offer Montanans the representation they deserve in a regulatory board. The current BOD is repressive and allows for trade violations by one profession over two others. No other profession in Montana is currently regulated by an employer such as in the instance of the BOD.

Dental hygienists are fully qualified to license, discipline, and regulate our profession. We are very concerned with public safety and high educational standards for the dental hygiene profession. The MDHA has compiled several examples of self-regulation for dental hygiene in other states. Similar to the Montana Board of Nursing, dental hygienists understand the profession and are best qualified to uphold high standards. Furthermore, it is misunderstood that a separate board would be able to change scope of practice. As you know, any change in the scope of practice requires legislation.

During a recent BOD conference call meeting the Montana Dental Association proposed the board enact sub-committees for dental hygienists and denturists. Due to the majority of dentists on the board the proposal passed. It is important to note this option does absolutely nothing to change the situation for the two professions it will be imposed upon. Please, do not consider this a solution to the oppressive structure of the current BOD.

Sincerely,

Kim Dunlap, President
Montana Dental Hygienists' Association

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